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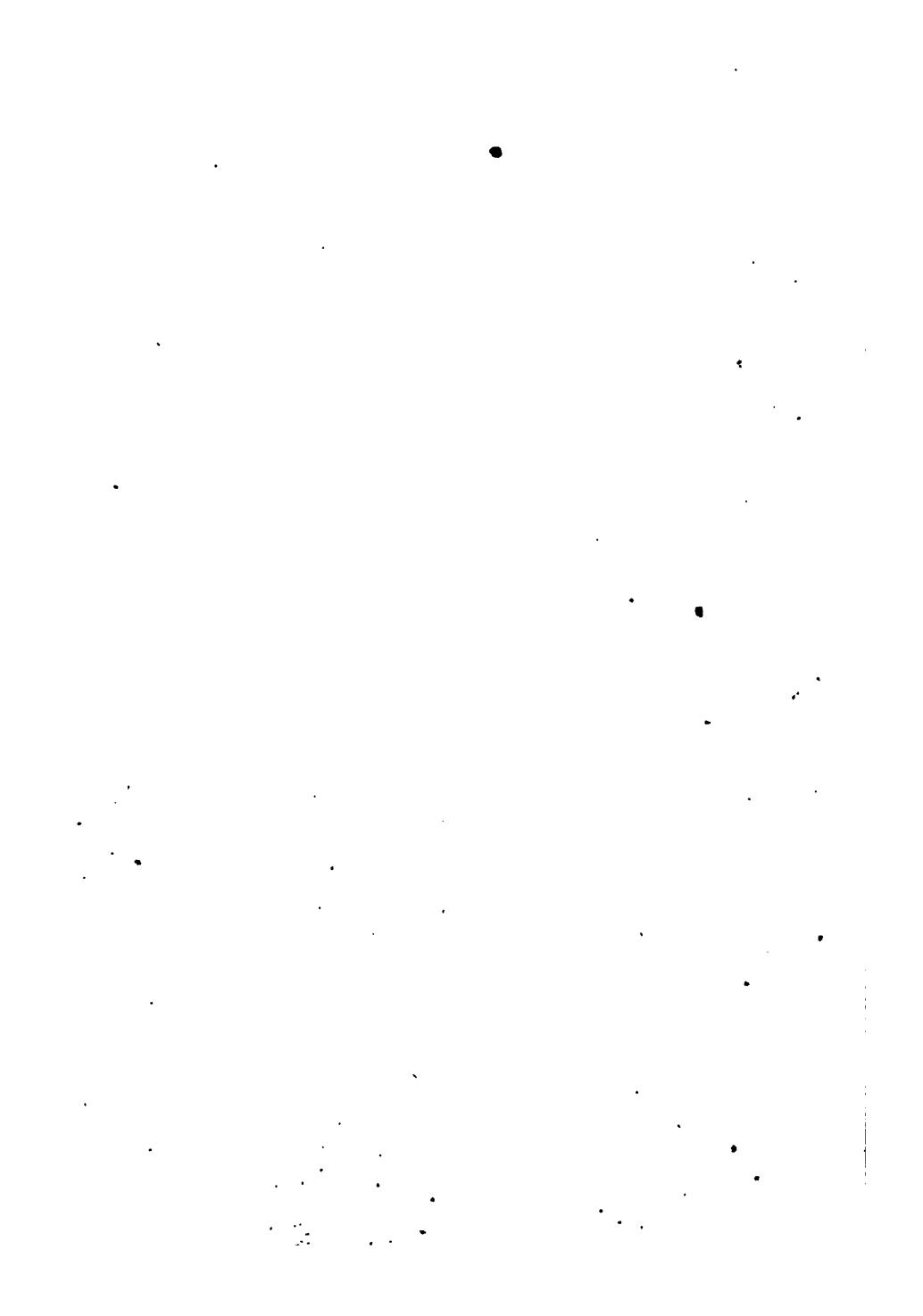
INQUIRY
ON
PREDESTINATION
—
CRONHELM

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INQUIRY
INTO
THE ORIGIN
OF THE
BELIEF IN PREDESTINATION.

LONDON :
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

I N Q U I R Y
INTO
THE ORIGIN
OF THE
BELIEF IN PREDESTINATION.

BY
F. W. CRONHELM.

LONDON :
RIVINGTONS, WATERLOO PLACE.
1860.

110. d. 61.



TO

THE REV. E. MELLOR, M.A.

THE PUPIL AND FRIEND OF

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON;

AS A TOKEN

OF THE AUTHOR'S ESTEEM,

This Inquiry

IS INSCRIBED.

CROW WOOD, NEAR HALIFAX,
MARCH 21, 1860.



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INQUIRY,

&c.

I. APOLOGY.

TRUE Philosophy unites with Revelation in warning us against the futile presumption of attempting to look into mysteries beyond the sphere of human investigation; for it is impossible that the Finite should ever comprehend the Infinite.

But, unhappily, the finite mind may *misconceive* where it cannot comprehend; and there is no presumption in the endeavour to remove such misconceptions of things incomprehensible.

The moral, not the historical, origin of Predestination is the subject of this Inquiry. Its

B

object is to show that the belief in Predestination has originated in misconceptions of the Divine Eternity, and of the Divine Foreknowledge; and that doctrinal errors the most serious, the most perplexing, have resulted from such misconceptions.

Before approaching the consideration of the Divine Eternity, let us endeavour to counteract two erroneous tendencies of modern Philosophy: firstly, as to our being left in utter and hopeless ignorance of the Deity; and, secondly, as to the mystification of His relations to Space and Time. When our minds are disencumbered of these prejudices, we shall be better enabled to consider what Reason and Revelation teach us of the Divine Eternity; and how it has happened that a doctrine so contrary to the intuitive sense of moral responsibility, and to the plain declarations of Scripture, as PREDESTINATION, should ever have obtained a place in human belief.

II. THINGS INCOMPREHENSIBLE NOT INCONCEIVABLE.

Much confusion of ideas has arisen in modern philosophy from using these two words, incomprehensible, inconceivable, as synonymous, notwithstanding the material distinction that exists between them. That this distinction should have been overlooked in one of the ablest works of the present age on Metaphysical Theology (Mr. Mansel's Bampton Lectures), is matter of deep regret. It may, in some degree, be attributed to the influence of the German Philosophers, in whose less copious, however expressive language, *Unbegreiflich* is the only term for both these negatives. The numerous extracts in Mr. Mansel's erudite Notes show how deeply his mind is imbued with German Metaphysics.

The distinction between the two negatives will be better traced from the positive forms,—conceive, comprehend—conception, comprehension¹. To conceive an object is to form some

¹ See Note A on their etymology.

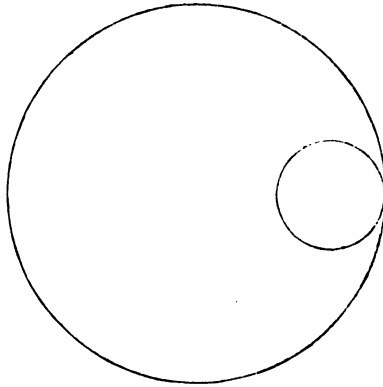
notion of it, to apprehend it, however imperfectly: to comprehend an object is to know it thoroughly and perfectly. The conception of an object is to have formed some notion of it, which, though perhaps only a *germ* in the mind, is still appropriate to the object, and capable of development into further knowledge. The comprehension of an object implies an entire and perfect knowledge, to which no addition can be made. This distinction is further evinced by conceive having a middle term between the positive and the negative, *misconceive*, whilst the meaning of comprehend excludes the possibility of any such intermediate term.

Hence, we may conceive what we cannot comprehend; we may have a conception, where comprehension fails and is impossible. So also of the negative terms. Things incomprehensible in their infinitude, or in their mystery, may not be inconceivable as facts, apparent to our reason, or revealed to our faith.

Apprehend approaches nearly to the meaning of conceive, though there seems to be a shade of distinction. In the progress of knowledge—

apprehension, conception, comprehension,—apprehension may be considered as the *dawn* of conception.

If the illustration from a simple diagram may be permitted,—



it is impossible that the smaller of these two circles should contain or *comprehend* the greater; but, on the other hand, it is as possible that the smaller should come in contact with the greater, should *apprehend* it. So also the finite mind cannot comprehend the Infinite, but may apprehend it, or conceive its existence.

If any one should object that, according to this definition, the word *inconceivable* could never

be appropriately used, and would, in fact, be banished from language, the following observations may afford an answer. We can form no conception of impossibilities, of things self-contradictory in their very nature. All such are, therefore, inconceivable. To call them incomprehensible would confer on them a dignity which they scarcely merit. But there is another sense in which inconceivable is truly and peculiarly appropriate—in the case of things of which we are utterly ignorant,—of which we can form no conception, though not in the category of incomprehensibilities. When the Apostle declares, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him,”—he pronounces us unable to form any notion of the blessedness of our future existence; and it is, therefore, manifestly *inconceivable*. But it would be a great abuse of language to call this blessedness *incomprehensible*, possessing as it does no attribute of infinitude, or of mystery.

But let us revert to the proposition:—The finite mind cannot comprehend the Infinite, but

may apprehend or conceive it. Mr. Mansel has attempted to formulate the negative of this proposition in the shape of a demonstration; and the respect due to such an authority is a sufficient apology for examining his argument.

Lecture 3, p. 51, Ed. 4: "Philosophers who are anxious to escape this conclusion (that we cannot conceive the Infinite or the Absolute as existing), have sometimes attempted to evade it, by asserting that we may have in consciousness a partial, though not a total, knowledge of the Infinite and the Absolute. But here again the supposition refutes itself. To have a partial knowledge of an object is to know a part of it, but not the whole. But the part of the Infinite which is supposed to be known must be itself either infinite or finite. If it is infinite, it presents the same difficulties as before. If it is finite, the point in question is conceded, and our consciousness is allowed to be limited to finite objects. But in truth it is obvious, on a moment's reflection, that neither the Absolute nor the Infinite can be represented in the form of a whole composed of parts. Not the Absolute; for the existence of a whole is dependent

on the existence of its parts. Not the Infinite; for if any part is infinite, it cannot be distinguished from the whole; and if each part is finite, no number of such parts can constitute the Infinite."

Now, in answer to this reasoning, Mr. Mansel *assumes*, entirely without foundation, that our inadequate and imperfect conceptions of the Divine Being are in the nature of knowing certain *parts* of an infinite *whole*; and the dilemma of such parts being either finite or infinite is gratuitous, and derived solely from his own misassumption. Of the Divine Essence we can conceive nothing in its abstract infinitude and absoluteness; but of the Divine Omnipotence and Wisdom we can form some conceptions, as manifested in the wonders of Creation; and of the Divine Mercy and Love we can form some conceptions, as revealed to us in the gracious provisions for our redemption and everlasting happiness. However imperfect, however inadequate, such conceptions may be to His infinite Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, we know and feel that they are not imaginary, but truthful as far as they go; that they are *germs* of more

adequate notions to be developed hereafter during the progress of our immortal existence; and, to use the favourite words of this distinguished author, not useless as merely *speculative* truth, but fraught with maxims of *regulative* wisdom.

Mr. Mansel appears to have had this argument much at heart; and in Note 10, on the passage quoted, p. 227, has called to his assistance the authority of a powerful auxiliary, Bishop Browne, who has written: "If it is said that we may apprehend God directly, though not comprehend Him, that we may have a direct and immediate knowledge partly, and in some degree, and though not of His Essence, yet of the Perfections flowing from it: I answer, That all the Attributes and Perfections of God are in their real nature as infinite as His very Essence; so that there can be no such thing as having a direct view of Him in part; for whatever is in God is equally infinite. If God is to be apprehended at all by any direct or immediate idea, He must be apprehended as Infinite; and in that very act of the mind He would be comprehended: there is no medium between apprehending an Infinite Being directly, and analogically."

Now it is obvious that the Bishop's argument, as to our inability to form any conception of God's Attributes because they are as infinite as His Essence, applies only to the abstract existence of those Attributes, and not to their manifestation in the wonders of Creation and Revelation apprehensible by the finite mind. If we were not to behold and admire, why did God create? If we were not to believe and adore, why did He reveal?

The inspired Writers entertained none of these metaphysical qualms at our partial conceptions of the Divine Perfections. They expatiate in wonder and praise on the little we can conceive—in awe and adoration on the much beyond our conception.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and

his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." And then the Psalmist turns from the wonders of Creation to those of Revelation. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." So, after a sublime effusion on the power and wisdom of the great Creator, Job concludes: "Lo, these are *parts* of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" So also St. Paul: "For we know in *part*, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Far from denying the truth of our partial conceptions in this life, the Apostle points to their progressive development hereafter. The metaphor borrowed from the semi-opaque glass of the ancients, and the indistinct vision which

it afforded, is singularly appropriate and instructive.

The importance of rectifying these philosophical views, as to our utter ignorance of the Deity, is such, that we make no apology for quoting at length the opinion of a writer who has placed the argument in a powerful light—the Eclectic Reviewer of Mr. Mansel's Bampton Lectures, one of the ablest and most candid of his critics:—

“We cannot refrain from expressing our regret that Mr. Mansel has espoused the opinion of Sir William Hamilton on the negativity of our conception of the Infinite. That the disciple should have failed to establish a position which even such a master, with his unparalleled powers of logic and learning, has not succeeded in rendering impregnable, we do not marvel. But we are unfeignedly sorry that on this point perilous concessions should be made to the Rationalists, even in the very efforts to overthrow them. In maintaining the counter-doctrine of the positivity of our conception, let us not be misunderstood. We do not contend for a conception which is adequate, complete, in-

clusive — a conception which in fact would amount to a comprehension. From its very nature, the Infinite must for ever transcend the faculties of a finite creature. ‘Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?’ In the spirit of the ancient patriarch, the wisest philosopher on earth, as he stands on the highest peak of knowledge he has yet reached, may exclaim, ‘Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?’ In claiming for the mind something more than what is termed a merely negative conception of the Infinite, we are careful to distinguish between a positive *notion*, and a positive *comprehension*; and we cannot but suspect that Mr. Mansel’s reasoning is based on the confusion of these two ideas. Without entering at large on the whole question at issue, between what we may denominate the positive and the negative schools, we wish to draw attention to a significant admission, made both by Sir William Hamilton and Mr. Mansel. While repudiating the positive notion of the Infinite, they both acknowledge

that we possess an *irresistible belief* in it. We confess ourselves unable to understand a psychology which allows so strange a schism in the soul, as is involved in such a distinction. Unable to find the Infinite in our conception, we are remitted to faith. We do not conceive the Infinite, but we believe it! The question is forced upon us, Believe what? Faith must have some object on which it is exercised, and what is the object furnished to it in the present case? It will not surely be contended by any one that there is such a mental experience as a negative faith. All faith, we imagine, is sufficiently positive. It is faith in something; in something, which before it receives the affiancement of the mind, must have been previously notionalized. Are we to suppose that faith is endowed with a creative faculty, or at least with such a power of alchemy that it can transmute that which is negative, whilst a conception, into a conviction that shall be positive?

“Whether the material for our faith came from our sense-experiences or from our intuitions, the faith can be no more positive than the experiences or the intuitions. And to speak of

that becoming a *potence* in faith, which is an *impotence* in thought, is, in our judgment, to trifle with language. A word or two in defence of our statement that our conception is always as positive as our belief, may serve to clear up the confusion which has gathered round not only this, but many correlative subjects. It has frequently been asserted that we do and must believe many things of which we can form no conception. This language contains a fallacy which the following illustrations may serve to expose.

“The physiologist says, ‘I believe in life, though what life is, is to me inconceivable.’ Now here faith and conception have no relation to each other whatever. The object of faith is different from the object of conception. When the proposition is purged from its equivocation, the conception is as clear as the faith is strong. For what is it that he believes? It is the *fact* of life. And what is that he cannot conceive? It is the *essence* of life. Let the subject of predication be one and the same, and we instantaneously perceive that the faith and the conception are equally positive. He conceives the

fact of life as clearly as he believes it. But in truth his faith has no relation to the essence, neither has his conception.

“Shall we take a Scripture doctrine instead of a scientific fact? The issue is in this case the same. We believe in the Incarnation. But does faith outstrip conception, and include a more positive element than is furnished by conception? The Incarnation is as conceivable as it is credible. We conceive that it is a fact, and we believe that it is a fact. We do not conceive its mode, neither do we believe its mode; and it is well to remember that the requirement of God is not that we believe in the *mode* of the union of the human with the Divine, but in the *fact*. Here the limit of conception determines the limit of faith. Is the question asked, ‘What do I believe?’ I can only answer it by declaring what I *conceive*, faith creating no part of its object, but receiving the whole at the hand of conception ².”

² Eclectic Review, March, 1859.

III. OF SPACE AND TIME.

Matter and its substratum were the vexed questions of the old Philosophy. Space and Time are equally so in the new. The ancients had no conception that the universe could be created, without matter being previously provided for the Deity to work with. They never dreamt that matter itself could have been created¹. And the moderns are equally perplexed with Space and Time, what they really are, and in what relation they stand to the Creator. Some suppose them to be mere modes of being, or of thought. Others, extending them to infinitude, consider them to be attributes of the Infinite Being, or even the Infinite Being himself. Thus, "Sir Isaac Newton thought that the Deity, by existing every where, and at all times, constitutes space and time, immensity and eternity. This probably suggested to his friend, Dr. Samuel Clarke, what he calls the

¹ See Note B on the creation of matter.

argument *à priori*, for the existence of an immense and eternal Being. Space and Time, he thought, are only abstract or partial conceptions of an immensity and eternity which forces itself on our belief. And as immensity and eternity are not substances, they must be the attributes of a Being who is necessarily immense and eternal." (Reid, vol. i. ch. 3.) This *à priori* argument has in our day been more fully developed by Mr. William Gillespie.

But the insuperable objection to such views is, that God's Omnipresence is made to consist in the diffusion of His essence through infinite space, thus rendering it locally divisible, however its inseparability may be contended for. And, though not at first so striking, an equal objection lies against the notion of the Divine Eternity being an everlasting succession without beginning and without end, as will be shown more fully hereafter.

Dr. Reid has candidly confessed, "We are at a loss to what category or class of things we ought to refer Space and Time. They are not beings, but rather the receptacles of all created beings, without which they could not have had

the possibility of existence." Will no one do for the moderns what they have done for the ancients by bringing the creation of matter to their aid? Will no one venture to suggest that, in the beginning, *God created space and time, as the receptacles of all beings to be called into existence by His Almighty fiat?* Plato and Aristotle could not, perhaps, have been more astonished, had any one in their day propounded the creation of Matter, than modern philosophers will be at the creation of Space and Time. And yet they may find it to relieve them from many perplexities. It removes the anomaly that there can be any existency *independent* of the First Great Cause. It exonerates the Deity from a kind of subjection to those two mysterious things: and it will help us to form conceptions less unworthy of His supremacy, less inadequate of His perfections.

But objections, such as these, will be made.

Where was God before the creation of space? *Where* is He now? Does not His Omnipresence mean that He is every where? Was He no where before Creation? And is He not somewhere now? Is there not a local Paradise?

—Is there not a local Heaven in space, where His presence and glory are manifested ?

To such questions as these the answers are : The very word *where* is inapplicable to Him who cannot resemble His creatures in their relations to space. His omnipresence pervades the universe in knowledge and power, not in the diffusion of His essence. There is a local Heaven, where the holy Angels are, with three human beings, Enoch and Elijah, who never died, and the Divine Redeemer, the first who triumphed over Death—the three witnesses of Immortality, under the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Gospel dispensation. There is a local Paradise, where the Spirits of the Redeemed await the resurrection of their bodies, and their final admission into Heaven. And God's glory, which is manifested every where, is especially manifested there, in the transfigured humanity of Christ, the visible temple for evermore of the invisible God !

IV. OF TIME.

Time is for all things that had a beginning. It is the law of existence to all created beings. Time is to duration, what extension is to space. It is the succession, the progress, the *onflow* of existence.

When we reflect on life, we perceive that we exist from moment to moment; that we have a past behind us, commencing from our birth; that we have a future before us, on which we are always advancing. This future of ours is constantly receding into the past: the present is the brief, evanescent boundary between them, —the moment won from the future, and immediately relinquished to the past.

But there is this difference between the past and the future. The past *must* have a beginning: the future *may*, or *may not*, have an end. The fiat of the Almighty Creator has awarded to the angelic and the human races, that their future shall have no end. This future without end for created beings is often called *eternity*;

but it would be more correct to term it, in relation to them, infinite time, or rather unending time. For the law of successive existence must attach to immortal creatures through all duration. To the highest of the archangels, as well as to man, immortality will be the perpetual onflow of existence, ever receding from the past, ever advancing into the endless future.

This great law of successive time can never cease to govern created beings. In the announcement of the seventh Angel of the Revelation, that "there should be Time no longer," the meaning cannot be that successive duration shall cease for mankind. The words may intimate that the present measurement of Time by days and years shall cease, or, rather, perhaps, that the things of Time in this world, things temporal, shall pass away, and be succeeded by a state of things unchangeable.

Hence, throughout our immortal existence in the heaven hereafter, we shall still be creatures of time, still have a past, a present, a future; a past of solemn memories, a present of ineffable enjoyment, a future of ever-blissful anticipation.

V. MISCONCEPTIONS OF ETERNITY.

The true eternity, without *beginning* as without *end*, belongs to God alone. In creating immortal beings, like angels and men, He has given them an existence without end. But they all, of necessity, had a beginning ; and from that beginning sprung their onflow of existence, their progressive duration, their past, present, and future.

We can readily conceive of successive duration without end, in the future ; but it is contradictory to reason, it is impossible, to conceive of a successive duration in the past without a beginning. And, therefore, the self-existent Being—He who is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning as without end—can have no succession in His duration ; no past, no future. He is omnipresent in duration, as well as in space. He abides, as Dr. Watts has happily expressed the idea, in

“ An everlasting now ! ”

Such is the eternity which He inhabits !

But it has been well remarked that, "as our eyes shrink from gazing steadfastly on the sun, so our minds seem to seek refuge from the effulgence of so glorious an existence in dimmer contemplations of the Deity." Our limited faculties seek to assimilate the mode of His existence to our own ; and thus we conventionally attribute to God a past, a present, a future. We think and speak of Him as existing *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth. We imagine His omniscience, as an infinite memory, looking back through all the past ; as an infinite prescience, looking forwards through all the future. We consider the resurrection of the dead, and the great Judgment, as a day *to come* for Him, as well as for ourselves. In fact, we make His existence to be the same *in kind* as our own, surpassing it only *in degree*.

Our philosophy, our divinity, our poetry, are so replete with these misconceptions of the Divine existence that it is scarcely necessary to adduce examples. Two, however, may be selected as less generally known : one from a writer of great logical acumen, Mr. William Gillespie ; the other from a profound antiquary, Dr. Stukeley.

VI. GILLESPIE.

It was in the year 1833 that Mr. William Gillespie published his remarkable book, "On the necessary existence of God." His theory has the merit of extreme simplicity. It is an *à priori* argument for the Divine existence and attributes, deducing them from pure reason, without any reference to the evidences of Creation or Revelation. Not that he undervalued these, for he also wrote an excellent treatise, "On the Evidences of Christianity;" but his position is, that the primary foundation of all religion must be the conviction of this truth—" *There is a God;*" and that "the Christian faith does not *lay*, but *builds on*, this foundation."

From the notions of infinite space and duration, of which we cannot divest our minds, he deduces, and thinks he has demonstrated, that the substance or essence of Deity is extended through infinite space; and His existence through infinite duration, a successive duration without end or beginning.

This is obviously an assimilation to our own

existence *in kind*, surpassing it only *in degree*. We are beings of extension. We occupy a limited portion of space. The Divine Being is of infinite extension. He occupies the whole of illimitable space. It is by pervading all things that He upholds the great frame of creation, and maintains its laws and its order. It is by pervading our hearts and minds that He is conscious of every thought and every desire ; for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." These words of St. Paul are the motto affixed to Mr. Gillespie's book, though not used as a text or argument. He guards this infinite extension of Deity through all space from the notion of *divisibility* by that of *inseparability*. Material substances may be divided into parts, and these parts separated from each other ; but space cannot be divided into separable parts. No portion of space can be separated or removed in thought, without still leaving space in unbroken continuity. Therefore, the Divine Nature is indivisible, though infinitely extended.

This reasoning is not satisfactory. Notwithstanding the unbroken continuity of space, we can still think of different portions of space in the heavens and the earth, in various places on

the earth, within the walls of a room, and on the outside of those walls. The same would apply to an infinite extension of the Divine Substance.

In his view of the duration of God, there is again an assimilation to our own mode of existence. We live in a successive onflow of time, with a past, a present, and a future. The Divine Eternity is considered to be an *infinite* onflow of existence, with a past, a present, and a future. But the incongruity is overlooked, that there can be an infinite succession of existence in a Being who had *no beginning*. This is a supposition from which our minds revolt, as an impossibility; and it is, therefore, contradictory to that pure reason, or intuitive perception of truth, from which Mr. Gillespie deduces his whole theory.

The mystery of the Divine Omnipresence and Eternity cannot be solved or explained by any assimilation to the mode of existence in created beings. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite.

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.”

God created us in *His* likeness, but we are not to imagine Him in *ours*.

VII. DR. STUKELEY.

In his treatise on the monuments and religion of the Druids, Dr. Stukeley notices their belief in a Divine Trinity, and takes the opportunity of vindicating this patriarchal doctrine in the following eloquent passage:—

“All possible perfections, both moral and natural, must needs be inherent in the First and Supreme Being, because from Him alone they can flow. This is, in one comprehensive word, what we call *good*. But good, unexercised, un-employed, incommunicate, is no good, and implies a contradiction when affirmed of the All-good Being. Therefore, it undeniably follows, there never *was* a time, never *could be*, when God was useless, and did not communicate of His goodness.

“But there *was* a time before creation, before this beautiful fabric of the world was made, before even chaos itself, or the production of the rude matter of which the world was made. And this time must be affirmed, not only as to the

material creation, but also as to that of angels and spiritual beings. Reckon we never so many ages, or myriads of ages, for the commencement of creation, yet it certainly began, and there was a time *before* that beginning. For, by the definition, creation is bringing that into being which did not exist before. There must, therefore, have been a time before it.

“Here then occurs the difficulty of filling up that infinite gap before creation. Consider the Supreme First Being, sitting in the centre of an universal solitude¹, environed with the abyss of infinite nothing, a chasm of immense vacuity! What words can paint the greatness of the solecism? what mind does not start at the horror of such an absurdity? and especially supposing this state to have subsisted for infinite ages.

“’Tis in vain to pretend that a Being of all perfections can be happy in Himself, in the mere consciousness of these perfections, whilst He does no good to any thing; in the reflexive idea of His possessing all excellencies, whilst He exerts no tittle of any one. This is the picture of a Being quite dissonant to that of the All-good.

¹ “Als wir sassen allein in die Einsamkeit.”—*Klopstock's Messiah*.

“And as the Druids would, without difficulty, judge that there must be only one self-originated First Being, the origin of all things; so they would see the necessity of admitting one or more eternal Beings, or Emanations from that First Being, in a manner quite distinct from creation *This is the internal Divine fecundity of the fruitful cause of all things. Creation is His external fecundity.*”—The Temple of Abury, p. 86, 87.

The noble truth, so concisely expressed in the last sentence of this extract, will be an apology for its length. But the whole argument is illustrative of the tendency of the human mind to assimilate the mode of the Divine existence to its own. In the first place, successive duration is attributed to the Deity, by ascribing to Him a past, in the ages anterior to Creation; which past implies a present, and a future also. Secondly, as the need of society is a feeling incidental to human nature, an analogous want during those long ages is attributed to the Almighty, and provided for by the Uncreated Emanations of His glorious Being, which constitute the Triune God!

VIII. GLIMPSES OF THE TRUTH.

Augustine among the Fathers, Boethius and Aquinas among the Schoolmen, and some modern Divines have had glimpses of the truth that there can be no succession in the Divine Eternity. But few, if any, have carried it out to its legitimate conclusions. After asserting it, they appear to lose sight of it, and to relapse into the common notion of a successive existence in the Deity. Thus, Philip Skelton, in the 3rd vol. of his excellent Sermons, p. 508, says, "To God nothing is, properly speaking, past or future: all is present." Yet, forgetting this, at p. 527, he writes, "*one-half of eternity had passed, ere the infinitely good God gave birth to any creature.*"

So also the eloquent F. W. Robertson: "Our only measure of time is by the succession of ideas It is not so with God. There is no succession of ideas with Him God's dwelling-place is that eternity which has neither past nor future, but is one vast, immeasurable present." And yet, almost in the same breath,

he had said, "We make a fanciful distinction between eternity and time—there is no real distinction. We are in eternity at this moment. That has begun to be with us which never began with God." Here he speaks of eternity as the time without end of immortal creatures, and not of that eternity without beginning or succession which belongs to God alone.

IX. LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

There are many passages in the Bible, which appear to sanction the misconceptions of the Divine Existence to which we have alluded. But, on due consideration, we shall find them all to have been written in accommodation to our limited faculties, the better to impress upon us practical truths,—just in the same manner as the feelings and emotions of human nature are in Holy Scripture frequently ascribed to the Deity.

But there are other passages, the tendency of which is to give us a view of the Divine Existence, far elevated above any successive duration similar to our own. The self-existent Jehovah revealed his name to Moses as the “I AM,” the abiding, not the on-moving Existence. Our Divine Redeemer, during his mission on earth, spoke sometimes as man, other times as God. When He spoke from his manhood, He spoke as a being of time, having a past, a present, a future. But when He spoke from his Godhead,

He repeated the language of Jehovah to Moses :
“Before Abraham was, I AM,” not I was.

St. Peter’s words, “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” seem to be more than *relative*, in regard to the inadequacy of all periods of time, the longest as well as the shortest, to measure the Divine duration. May we not consider them *absolute*, as implying the entire absence of succession in that sublime Existence which has neither beginning nor end? The same observation is applicable to the words of Moses in the 90th Psalm: “For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.”

X. THE INFERENCE.

As in God there can neither be past nor future, nor any succession of duration, it follows that in HIM there can be no series, or sequency of actions. For, if in HIM there could be one act *after* another, then to Himself would some of his acts be past, and others future: and we should thus relapse into the misconception of attributing to Him a successive duration like our own.

What, as regards ourselves, is truly a series of acts or dispensations,—the creation of man, the deluge, the call of Abraham, the birth of the Messiah, the resurrection of the dead, the final Judgment,—all these must be to God, not a series of acts or dispensations, but one eternal, simultaneous energy. His perception of the successive development of his dispensations, as apprehended by his creatures, does not make them successive as regards Himself.

But these contemplations of the Divine Eternity reach no further than the negation of the

limits and imperfections of all created minds. We can form no conception of the HOW of that glorious Existence, which *transcends* the relations of Time and Space. If the Cherubim themselves veil their eyes before the HOLY ONE, how much more must his glory be *incomprehensible* to man!

XI. CAUSATION ASSOCIATED WITH FOREKNOWLEDGE.

God's present knowledge of our present acts involves no idea of *causation*. He who sees all things sees what we are thinking and doing every moment. His knowledge, in this case, seems an *effect*, rather than a *cause*.

But if, under the misconception that there can be any future to God, we say that a present act of ours was *foreseen* by Him, thousands of years before we were born ; then the idea of *causation* becomes associated with such *foresight*. We naturally infer, how can that which God foresaw before our birth fail to come to pass ?

The objection that God's foreknowledge is not *causal*, but merely his prescience of what free agents will do, still leaves the uncomfortable impression that, from the force of circumstances foreseen by God as influencing our will, our present act, though one of free agency, could not possibly be avoided.

In his fourth Essay, On the Liberty of Moral Agents, Dr. Reid observes :—“ The prescience of

the Deity must be different, not only in degree, but also in kind, from any knowledge we can attain of futurity. Though we can have no conception how the future free actions of man may be known by the Deity, this is not a sufficient reason to conclude that they cannot be known. Do we know, or can we conceive how God knows the secrets of men's hearts? Can we conceive how God made the universe without any pre-existent matter? All the ancient philosophers believed this to be impossible: and for what reason but this, that they could not conceive how it could be done¹? Can we give any better reason that the actions of free agents cannot be certainly foreseen by God?"

This is an argument for free agency, accepting the common notion of a succession and a real futurity in the Divine Existence; but, even if this view could remove the notion of causation from God's Foreknowledge, it would still leave on the mind some apprehension of necessity or destiny, notwithstanding the indignant disclaimer which Milton ascribes to the Almighty Father.

¹ See Note B on the creation of matter.

XII. MILTON.

"For man will listen to his glozing lies,
 And easily transgress the sole command,
 Sole pledge of his obedience : so will fall
 He and his faithless progeny. Whose fault?
 Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had from me
 All he could have. I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
 Such I created all the ethereal Powers
 And Spirits, both them who stood, and them who
 failed ;
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appeared,
 Not what they would? What praise could they
 receive,
 What pleasure I, from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also is choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoiled,
 Made passive both, had served necessity,
 Not me? They therefore, as of right belonged,
 Were so created, nor can justly accuse

Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination overruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree,
Or high foreknowledge ; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I. If I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain, unforeknown.
So, without least impulse, or shadow of fate,
Or ought by me immutably foreseen,
They trespass, authors to themselves in all,
Both what they judge, and what they choose, for so
I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves. I cannot change
Their nature, nor revoke the high decree,
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom ; they themselves ordained their
fall.

The Angels by their own suggestion fell,
Self-tempted, self-depraved. Man falls, deceived
By the others first : man therefore shall find
grace,
The others none. In mercy and justice both,
Through heaven and earth, so shall my glory
excel ;
But mercy first and last shall brightest shine !”

Well might the Christian Bard express his own satisfaction at this condensed, this philosophic view of the origin of Evil—this triumphant assertion of his

“great argument,
To vindicate the ways of God to man,”

by adding :

“Thus while God spake, ambrosial fragrance filled
All heaven, and in the blessed Spirits elect
Sense of new joy ineffable diffused !”

Milton, however, in this and other passages, falls into the common misconception of ascribing successive duration to the Divine Existence. God is represented as speaking of *a future* to Himself.

XIII. PREDESTINATION.

The doctrine of Predestination rests entirely on the notion that there is a *future* to the Almighty, which is the object of his foreknowledge. Now, a *future* implies a *present* and a *past*, a successive existence, similar to our own in kind, surpassing it only in degree. But the Eternal had no beginning; and an eternal succession of existence in the past without a beginning being a manifest absurdity and impossibility, it follows that God's existence cannot be successive, cannot have a past, cannot have a future, but must be one abiding present.

There is, therefore, neither past nor future for the Almighty. He must be Omnipresent in duration, as in space. His must be the "everlasting NOW," without succession of existence; his, the ubiquitous HERE, without expansion of substance, or diffusion of essence. And his Foreknowledge must cease to be future, cease to be causal, cease to involve Predestination. If these views be correct, then

also must cease the perplexing conflict between the doctrine of Predestination, grounded on misconceptions of God's foreknowledge, and the intuitive truth of man's free agency and moral responsibility, declared alike by reason, by conscience, and by Revelation.

XIV. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

It is a remarkable fact that the Scripture passages most relied on by the advocates of Predestination should be taken from an Epistle, the principal object of which was to refute the Jewish doctrine of particular election, and to establish the equal call of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.” “Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.”

Having thus vindicated the equality of the Gentiles to the Jews before God, the Apostle

proceeds to that noble antithetical argument, on the parallelism between the fall of all men in Adam, and the restoration of all men in Christ.

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

The variation in the last verse, *many* instead of *all*, does not affect the argument, as some misconceive; for as the “many who were made sinners” were *all* men, so also the many “who shall be made righteous,” must be *all* men; meaning of course so far as the justification wrought for them, and the salvation offered them if they chose to accept it—which is confirmed by the parallel passage in 1 Corinthians: “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” In which words *spiritual* death and life are to be understood as well as *natural*.

After expatiating on the privileges and duties of Believers, the Apostle gives that beautiful summary of God's providence over them, which has been so strangely perverted to a limitation of their number: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

If we read this passage by the light of the preceding one, we shall see nothing exclusive in its meaning. Speaking after the manner of men of God's foreknowledge of human character, the Apostle makes predestination the consequence of such foreknowledge. Those whom He foreknew to be disposed to obey his call—those who (as our Saviour Himself said) "in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit

with patience;”—them “He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”—them He called to be faithful witnesses of the truth—them He justified on earth through the righteousness of faith—them He glorified in heaven as the heirs of immortality. They were neither foreknown, nor predestinated, nor called, nor justified, nor glorified, to the exclusion of others for whom this great salvation was equally wrought, and who had equal power not to neglect it. Else, where would be the justice of their condemnation?

In another chapter, the Apostle treats not of *personal*, but of *national* election: “The children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The national

election referred to in this passage is sufficiently evident from the Book of Genesis: "And the Lord said unto Rebekah, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." And in reference to his opening argument, St. Paul seems to apply the words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," to God's assertion of his right to call in the Gentiles to participate with the Jews in Gospel privileges ¹.

¹ See the Rev. Philip Skelton's Sermon on Predestination, vol. iii.; also an admirable Refutation of Mr. Spurgeon's Tenets, by the Rev. J. Hughes. Hatchard. 1857.

XV. ACCESSORY ARGUMENTS.

Though the main origin of the belief in Predestination lies, as has been shown, in misconceptions of the Divine Eternity and Foreknowledge, other considerations and feelings have not been wanting to support the erroneous inference.

The human mind, uneasy under the reproofs of conscience, seeks to escape from self-condemnation, by casting the blame of its transgressions on predestination. Sins, which are considered unavoidable, are felt to be less culpable,—a feeling which predisposes to a continuance in evil. On the other hand, there is the danger of a gratified sense of favouritism and superiority, in the notion of being one of the predestined Elect, which may generate spiritual pride and false security.

But it must be borne in mind that Predestination has no especial relation to Christianity. The doctrine of Necessity was familiar in the schools of Greek Philosophy; and the idea of

an irresistible destiny pervades the ancient drama. The noble, but unavailing struggles of heroic minds against the Fates, were a never-failing source of interest to the Athenian audience.

So also the idea of fatalism is inwoven through the whole Mohammedan religion. Its influence was manifested in the reckless daring of those fanatical armies of the false Prophet who subdued the fairest portions of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

XVI. ANALOGY OF NATIONAL ELECTION.

The most striking of the accessory arguments for Predestination is perhaps that which is derived from the analogy of national and individual Election. It is a reflection equally solemn and mysterious, that even now, in the nineteenth century from our Redeemer's Advent for the regeneration of the human race, by far the largest portion continue in pagan darkness, in the idolatrous religions of Fo, of Budh, of Brahma, and the apostasy of Mohammed. Who can deny that the nations elected to enjoy the light of Christianity, possess privileges and advantages for securing the great end of man's creation, everlasting life, far beyond the poor Mohammedans, Hindoos, Chinese, or the savage tribes in Africa and Australia? And this after granting that God's Equity will judge them all according to the light they possess. Well, then, if some nations enjoy this preference of God's election, why may it not apply to individuals

amongst those nations? It does no doubt apply in the contrasts of education and ignorance, of wealth, competence, and indigence, of being born and trained in pious or worldly families, amongst good or wicked companions. But however great the inequality in the means and opportunities of salvation, the intuitive feeling of free agency and moral responsibility remains in every breast. We repudiate predestination, and are self-conscious that if finally unblest, the fault will be our own alone.

XVII. THE DOCTRINE OF MOTIVES.

Some advocates of Predestination attach great importance to the doctrine of motives. Distinguishing the *spontaneity* of human actions from the *free agency* of the will, they contend that no rational being can act without a motive; and that the necessity of our acts is proved from their being prompted by the preponderating motive which circumstances impress upon the mind.

The fallacy of this argument may be readily shown. Man, of course, never acts without a motive. But his liberty, his free agency, his moral responsibility, lie in the power to *choose the motive* by which he is actuated.

“Choose ye,” said the inspired Legislator to the children of Israel, in his last solemn admonitions: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose* life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” “Choose ye,” is still the voice of con-

science, the voice of God within us, as well as the voice of Revelation.

In similar temptations, one man selects the love of sinful pleasure for his motive; another the sense of duty, the love of righteousness. David succumbs, whilst Joseph resists: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The pathetic reproof of our Saviour, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," points to the same conclusion; and shows that there was nothing exclusive in his declaration, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." For unless the Jews also had felt the drawings of the Father, as well as the disciples, but resisted the influences of Divine grace, the reproof would have been groundless and unmeaning. Without those influences, no man can come to Christ. The disciples felt them, chose to obey them, and came to Him. The Jews felt them, chose to disobey them, and "would not come to him that they might have life." Christ, therefore, justly reproofed them, whilst He lamented their fatal choice. Nor were these sayings of his for the

Jews alone, but for all men to the end of the world.

When St. Paul declared to King Agrippa, "I was not *disobedient* unto the heavenly vision," he implied that, even under those miraculous influences of Divine grace, he retained the option to obey, or to disobey.

XVIII. THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

Another argument in favour of Predestination is drawn from the Divine Sovereignty. It is considered derogatory from the dignity and authority of the Supreme Ruler of all things, that the will of any of his creatures should be allowed to act in opposition to his own; and that, consequently, it is absurd to suppose that his purposes and decrees can ever be frustrated.

This argument, when carried to its extreme, would prove too much. It would make God the author of all evil. It would desecrate Divine Justice, by the infliction of punishment for guilt that could not possibly be avoided.

The right view of the Divine Sovereignty is, that an all-wise, overruling Providence "educe good from evil," and renders human passions, and even human crimes, subservient to the accomplishment of great and benevolent designs. Thus, the ambition of Kings and Conquerors is overruled to the accomplishment of Divine purposes. As predicted by the prophet Isaiah, the con-

quests of Cyrus led to the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Not less, in the individual experience of all men, are the trials and afflictions of life, as well as its blessings, rendered instrumental for their welfare, temporal or everlasting.

In the matter of man's free agency and moral responsibility, God's purposes are not frustrated by human error and sin. His decree was to make man a free agent, and He would be acting in opposition to his own decree by destroying man's free agency, and thus rendering him an irresponsible being:—

“I cannot change
Their nature, nor revoke the high decree,
Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
Their freedom.”

Milton. See pp. 39, 40.

XIX. THE CELESTIAL NUMBER.

Of all the arguments for Predestination and particular Election, the most curious is that of "The Celestial Number," which found favour with some of the most eminent Divines of the middle ages. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century, thus states it, in Book I., ch. xvi., of the "*Cur Deus homo.*"

"It is agreed that God proposed, out of human nature which He made without sin, to restore the number of the angels who had fallen. For we take it as undoubtedly true that the rational nature, which either is, or is to be, blessed with the enjoyment of God, is foreknown by God to be of a certain rational and perfect number, so that it can neither be greater nor less. This is certain; for either God does not know in what number it would best be constituted, which is false; or, if He knows, He constitutes it in that number which He knows to be most fit for this end. Wherefore, either those angels who fell were made so as to be within this number, or,

because they exceeded it, were unable to persevere, and fell of necessity; which is an absurd thing to be imagined. Since, then, they ought to have been of that number, either their number must of necessity be restored, or the rational number will remain in an imperfect number, though it was foreknown to exist in a perfect number, which cannot be. They must therefore be restored from human nature, for there is no other nature from which they can be restored."

St. Anselm continues to argue that a second creation of angels "would seem to militate against the perfection of the first creation;" and that the creation of another race became necessary to fill up the vacuum in the celestial number.

But, in the midst of all this, there is an obvious under-current of argument, namely: That the angels being individual creations, ungifted with the power of reproduction, there was no means of filling up the vacuum from their own race; and that, in creating the supplementary race, the possibility of another vacuum was prevented by endowing man with the power of reproduction, so that there might be ample room, and to spare, for replenishing the celestial number preordained.

Can we imagine any thing more derogatory to the dignity of the great Creator—any thing more disparaging to his Wisdom and Goodness, than such views as these ?

They imply that the human race are indebted for their creation to the rebellion of Satan and his angels, and their expulsion from heaven, as the occasional cause; and that their unlimited power of reproduction is by no means for the benefit of the whole race, but merely that there might be a sufficient number out of whom God might elect the substitutes for the fallen angels, without the danger of another disappointment and another vacuum !

The worthy clergyman who, in 1858, favoured the world with a translation of the “*Cur Deus homo*,” was himself so impressed with the force of this argument that he actually omitted from his version the whole 18th chapter of the first Book, on account of its showing, “with much ingenuity, the probability that the number of the elect of men may be greater than that of the fallen angels; and this chapter is therefore omitted, as somewhat breaking the thread of the argument.”

How kindly jealous of the consistency of his Author! How careful and provident to keep out of his Reader's way the temptation of even looking at reasons which might invalidate so pious an argument!

XX. OBJECTION FROM THE INFLUENCE OF PRAYER.

This objection is presented in the form of a dialogue between the Author and a Friend:—

F. You have said many things on behalf of man's free agency; but it appears to me that you have not sufficiently considered another free agency, yet more important.

A. Whose?

F. The free agency of God.

A. I do not see the scope of your observation. Will you kindly explain it?

F. If there be one fact more striking than another, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, it is this: *the influence of prayer with God.*

A. There can be no doubt of it.

F. Well, then: In the government of the world, in the administration of his providence, God has condescended to be influenced by prayer. This means that He has chosen not to be bound by any eternal disposition of things from the

beginning, by any immutable concatenation of causes and effects; but that He has decided to retain to Himself the liberty of making such changes and alterations in events, whether regarding nations or individuals, as He sees fit and right. In a word, that He asserts *his free agency* in all things; and that, in answer to prayer, He changes and alters things previously disposed by Himself.

A. It is one of the mysteries of Divine Providence.

F. Yes. But your views are of little assistance in explaining it.

A. My object was to remove misconceptions, not to explain mysteries.

F. So far from that,—you have rendered this mystery of Providence yet more perplexing by your views of the absence of succession in the Divine existence, and by your *special Inference* that in God there can be no series or sequency of actions—that in Him there can be only one eternal, simultaneous energy. How do you reconcile this with his being influenced by prayer to do what otherwise He would not have done, or not to do what otherwise He would have done?

A. It is a mystery beyond our comprehension—a mystery as old as the creation of man. But why should you fasten it on any views of mine?

F. What I said was, that your views tend to perplex the matter more. So long as we could consider the Almighty to have an onflow of existence, like ourselves—a past, a present, and a future; so long as we could consider Him to have, like ourselves, a sequency of acts—there was less difficulty in conceiving Him to revoke to-day the sentence of yesterday, or to grant to-morrow the boon unintended to-day. The mystery seemed to lie more in his condescension to be influenced by the prayers of poor, fallible, sinful beings, like ourselves. It did not seem so much to affect his mode of existence, or his mode of action, however incomprehensible to us. But your views exalt the mystery into a higher sphere, and render it yet more incomprehensible. I begin to wish you had kept them to yourself, and never propounded them.

A. This is admirable. What if I should say of *truth*, that which has been said of another great principle: “Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum!”

F. I would not do you the injustice to suppose

that you would be content to unsettle men's minds for less than that. But you are stealing a long march upon us, in assuming these new views of yours to be *truth*.

A. I will make no such bold assertion. It was but the echo of your wish for their suppression. I propound them only for what they may be worth in argument.

F. Well, then, let us return to the argument, and not evade it. I fear, I gave you the opportunity of this digression.

A. Of which you consider me too happy to avail, and retreat from the main battle into a skirmish. But to return, as you say, to the argument: Whilst I admit the force of your observations, that the influence of prayer with God is less inconceivable on the old supposition that He has a successive existence, like our own, from day to day, and may change, as we do, to-morrow the purpose of to-day; I would appeal to your candour whether these low views of the operations of Deity, founded on analogies to our own limited faculties and imperfect modes of action, are likely to be correct; or whether higher and nobler views of His glorious existence, as tran-

scending all the relations of space and time to which men and angels are subject, are not more likely to be correct, however incomprehensible to our finite minds.

F. You remind me of our friend, Soame Jenyns: "Had God's revelation been *less incomprehensible*, it would certainly have been *more incredible*."

A. In that saying there is both force and truth. The mystery to me is this: that the one eternal energy whence sprung Creation and Providence, meaning by Providence the successive development of the Divine dispensations ordained by the great First Cause who can have no succession in Himself, made it one of those dispensations that prayer should be influential in modifying that successive development.

F. But this seems to me a remote, uncongenial view of the influence of prayer. It appears to remove the confiding, supplicating spirit far away from that Throne of Grace to which the Holy Scriptures both invite and promise access. That immediate communion with God, which is the very essence of prayer, seems to disappear in this view of yours.

A. Let me then suggest another view, sanctioned by the mysterious union of the Divine and human natures in our blessed Redeemer. As God, the eternity of the Son can have no succession of existence, no past, no future: but as man, Christ participates in the successive existence of created beings. As God, He inhabits eternity, He abides in "the everlasting NOW" of the "I AM." As man, He exists in unending Time, and has a past, a present, a future. As the heavenly Mediator and Intercessor, He receives and answers the daily prayers offered up through Him to the Throne of Grace.

F. I rejoice that you have found this *via media* for getting out of your difficulties. At all events, you have shown a disposition to come down from your transcendentals into the lower region of human apprehension. But I must not give in my adhesion too soon. I will take time to consider well of this, and see you again.

XXI. SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON.

The misconceptions of the Divine Eternity, and of the Divine Foreknowledge, which have originated the doctrine of Predestination, have been the cause of endless difficulties and perplexities to Philosophers and Divines in every age. The greatest of modern Philosophers thus feelingly alludes to them in his celebrated Disquisition on Causality.

“ St. Augustine repeatedly declares the conciliation of the foreknowledge, predestination, and free grace of God with the free will of man, to be a most difficult question, intelligible only to a few. Had he denounced it as a fruitless question, and (to understanding) soluble by none, the world might have been spared a large library of acrimonious and resultless disputation. The futile attempts to harmonize these antilogies to human understanding by human reasoning, have originated conflicting systems of theology, divided the Church, and, as far as possible, dishonoured religion :—

‘ Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy ! ’ ’

From the rich mine of erudition, with whose treasures this accomplished Author embellishes every subject which he discusses, there is one quotation from *Cardinal Cajetan*, so profound, so apposite, that its insertion here will readily be pardoned:—

“ Thus elevating our mental eye to a loftier range, we may suppose that God, from an excellence supernally transcending human thought, so foresees events and things, that from His Providence *something higher* follows than evitability or inevitability, and that this *passive prevision* of the event does not determine the alternative of either combination. And can we do so, the intellect is quieted; not by the evidence of *the truth known*, but by the inaccessible height of *the truth concealed*. And this to my poor intellect seems satisfactory enough, both for the reason above stated, and because, as St. Gregory expresses it, ‘The man has a low opinion of God, who believes of Him only so much as can be measured by human understanding.’ Not that we should deny aught that we have by knowledge or by faith, of the im-

mutability, actuality, universality, and similar attributes of God; but I suspect that *there is something here lying hid*, either as regards the relation between the Deity and the *event foreseen*, or as regards the connexion between the event itself and *its prevision*. Thus, reflecting that the intelligence of man in such matters, is as the eye of the owl in the blaze of day, I find its repose in ignorance alone. For it is more consistent, both with Catholic faith and with philosophy, to confess our blindness, than to assert, as things evident, what afford no tranquillity to the intellect; for evidence is tranquillizing. Not that I would, therefore, accuse all the Doctors of presumption; because, stammering as they could, they have all intended to insinuate, with God's immutability, the supreme and eternal efficiency of his intellect, and will, and power—through the infallible relation between the Divine election, and whatever comes to pass. Nothing of all this is opposed to the foresaid suspicion,—*that something too deep for us lies hid herein*. And assuredly, if it were thus promulgated, no Christian would err in

the matter of *Predestination*, as no one errs in the doctrine of the Trinity¹; because of the Trinity the truth is declared orally and in writing,—that this is a mystery concealed from human intellect, and to which faith alone is competent. Indeed, the best and most wholesome counsel is:—To begin with those things which we certainly know, and have experience of in ourselves; to wit, that all proceeding from our free will may or may not be performed by us, and therefore are we amenable to punishment or reward; but how, this being saved, shall there be saved the providence, foreknowledge and predestination of God, so as to believe what holy mother Church believes? For it is written, Be not wise in things above thee; there being many things revealed to thee, above thy human comprehension. And this is one of them.”

In this remarkable passage, the *truth concealed*, the *something too deep for us lying hid*, “in the relation between the Deity and the *event foreseen*, or as regards the connexion

¹ This was written before 1507; consequently long before Servatus and Campanus had introduced their unitarian heresies. (Sir William Hamilton’s Note.)

between the event itself and *its prevision*,"— may be considered to mark the efforts, the struggles, in the mind of *Cajetan* to emancipate itself from misconception of the Divine Foreknowledge, as implying a future and a past, and of the Divine Eternity, as a successive duration, like that of created beings.

XXII. MR. MANSEL.

In his erudite Notes on the 3rd and the 7th Bampton Lecture, Mr. Mansel has given a valuable collection of the opinions of ancient and modern philosophers on the question of the Divine Eternity being successive or not. But he does not appear to attach himself much importance to this question, nor to have gone into the consideration of the impossibility of an eternal succession of existence without a beginning.

In regard also to the question of predestination and free agency, he does not seem to appreciate the difference between futurity and non-futurity in the Divine Foreknowledge. But whatever flows from the pen of this eminent Author affords such matter for reflection, and is so deserving of attention, that we ought to let him speak for himself.

4th Ed. Lect. 7, p. 141, 142: "The endless controversy concerning Predestination and Free Will, whether viewed in its speculative, or in

its moral aspect, is but another example of the hardihood of human ignorance. The question, as I have observed before, has its philosophical as well as its theological aspect: it has no difficulties peculiar to itself; it is but a special form of the fundamental mystery of the co-existence of the Infinite and the Finite. Yet, with this mystery meeting and baffling human reason at every turn, theologians have not scrupled to trace in their petty channels the exact flow and course of Infinite Wisdom; one school boldly maintaining that even Omniscience itself has no knowledge of contingent events; another asserting, with equal confidence, that God's foreknowledge must be a restraint on man's freedom.

“If philosophy offers for the moment an escape from the dilemma by suggesting that God's knowledge is not properly *foreknowledge*, as having no relation to time, the suggestion itself is one which can neither be verified as a truth, nor even intelligibly exhibited as a thought; and the Rationalist evades the solution by shifting the ground of attack, and retorts that *Prophecy* at least is anterior to the event which it foretells, and that a prediction of

human actions is irreconcilable with human freedom."

Here are two objections, Mr. Mansel's own, and that of the Rationalist. He did not probably think it worth his while to refute the latter, but we will endeavour to do it for him. Prophecy is simply a miracle. God reveals to the Prophet what is present to Himself, but future to those for whom it is revealed. God's present knowledge of the future event does not predestinate it. Neither does the revelation of that knowledge. It was pitiful philosophy indeed in Wegscheider and Kant to deny the possibility of prophecy, on the ground that a prediction of future events is destructive of human freedom. (Note 28, Lect. 7.)

Mr. Mansel's own objection is of more importance: the position that "God's knowledge is not properly foreknowledge, as having no relation to time, can neither be verified as a truth, nor even intelligibly exhibited as a thought." If an eternal succession without a beginning be contradictory to the reason which God has given us; if it be so repugnant to our reason as to bear the character of an impossibility; then,

assuredly, we have grounds for disbelieving it, and for giving our assent to the absence of succession in the Divine Existence. If, by verifying it as a truth, it be meant that we should explain the HOW of this supreme Existence, this would be to ask the Finite to comprehend the Infinite. But we can believe in realities which are beyond demonstration. That we cannot intelligibly exhibit it as a *thought*, must depend on the meaning attached to intelligibility. If perfect comprehension, the answer on the *truth* will again apply. If mere apprehension or conception, the position that God's Eternity is without succession is not unintelligible.

XXIII. DR. DE BURGH.

Whilst this little Treatise was in the press, it was with feelings of mingled relief and gratitude that the Author met with the following clear and satisfactory explanation of the difficult passage in the Revelation alluded to in the Section on Time, in that able "Exposition of the Book of the Revelation," by the Rev. William De Burgh, D.D., of Trinity College, Dublin, Ed. 5, p. 190, 191.

"In the announcement that 'there shall be *time* no longer,' I would suggest, we should render, 'there shall be *delay* no longer:' for though the word in the original translated 'time' does indeed generally mean *time*, it is also frequently used to mean *delay*; and that this is the meaning here is, I think, obvious from what follows, where we find the things yet to be done, previous to the sounding of the seventh trumpet, are limited to a specified and short time. The meaning then is that the seventh trumpet should be sounded without delay; an

announcement thus solemnly made, with all the circumstances of power, to console the minds of the faithful of that day for the fearful events yet to happen, and about to be mentioned. It will be borne in mind also, that since the Book of the Revelation opened with the signs of the Lord's coming, there has been a considerable delay. Judgment has followed upon judgment, and 'the end is not yet;' and this may serve to explain why the assurance contained in this proclamation may be so needful at this time."

How singularly expressive are these anti-thetical meanings of words! The *time* slow in bringing an event is indeed *delay*. Hence also the *permit*, of which the excise are so chary, is not a *facility*, but an *obstacle* to trade; and the indispensable *let* in the Magistrate's passport becomes synonymous with *hindrance*, "without let or hindrance."

NOTES.

NOTE A.—ETYMOLOGY OF INCOMPREHENSIBLE, INCON- CEIVABLE.

IN Latin we find many traces of the Gothic in roots which have become obsolete in the written language, but are preserved in their derivatives. Amongst the most remarkable of these, is *Hand*, or *Hend*, by the common change of the vowel. Hence 'prehendo,' 'apprehendo,' 'comprehendo,' through all their verbal, substantive, and adjective forms, retaining in each the pervading idea of the *seizing, grasping* power of the hand. There is something peculiarly interesting in the history of this root,—committed, a little monosyllable, a nursling as it were, to the care of the mighty Latin Mother, who adopted and trained it, nourished it with her expressive prefixes and suffixes; and, after bringing it to full growth and maturity of significance, restored it to its relative, the Anglo-Saxon descendant of its primitive tongue—where it now asserts the sole possession of octosyllabic honour, as *Incomprehensibility*.

In this beautiful word, no less than six ideas are engrafted

on that of the Root, three by prefixes, and three by suffixes, namely :—

In — negation.

com (*con*) — united power.

pre (*præ*) — intensity.

(root) HEN — by elision, (*hend, hand,*) grasping power.

si — specialization, applied action.

bili — including power, capacity.

ty — generalization.

The parallel German word, *Unbegreiflichkeit*, is from the root *greif* (*seize, grip*), and may be literally rendered, *Unbegriplihood*.

Conceive, 'concupio,' is from a less vigorous root—*con* and *capio*, seize, thus denoting catch, lay hold of, apprehend. As already noticed, a want of copiousness in the German has compelled the philosophers of that language to use the same word, *Unbegreiflich*, for inconceivable and incomprehensible, a want of discrimination fatal to many of their arguments, in which they have unhappily been followed by one at least of our most eminent English metaphysicians.

And yet the materials for distinction were perhaps not wanting to the Germans in the neglected terms, *Ungedenkbar* and *Unfasslich*.

"Apprehend" (*ad* and *prehendo*) is of similar meaning to that of conceive, but somewhat weaker; and though from the same root as comprehend, its relative feebleness is denoted by the prefix *ad*, which expresses a *tendency* to lay hold of, in contradistinction from an actual *grasp*.

NOTE B.—ON THE CREATION OF MATTER.

THE atomic theory of Democritus, as refined by Boscovich, and more fully developed by that eminent philosopher, the late Dr. Samuel Brown, offers an hypothesis for the creation of matter, which, in a subject so far beyond the region of certainty, possesses many features of probability; particularly in getting rid of the vexed question of the *substratum*.

That the primary atoms are merely centres of force, i. e. mathematical points encircled with powers of repulsion and attraction, and that from the endless variety of combinations of repulsive and attractive forces the whole material universe is constructed—is a theory alike simple, comprehensive, sublime. To accomplish the dissolution of Nature, her Almighty Creator would only have to cancel the repulsive and attractive forces that encircle the atomic centres; and instantaneously, without an audible crash, without a visible wreck, the glorious fabric of the earth and the heavens would disappear from existence!

THE END.

LONDON:
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

By the same Author, price 1s.

THOUGHTS
ON
THE CONTROVERSY
AS TO
A PLURALITY OF WORLDS.

LONDON: RIVINGTONS. 1858.

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